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THE CHAIN OF COMMAND AND NCO SUPPORT CHANNEL

3-33. Communication among soldiers, teams, units, and organizations is essential to efficient and effective mission accomplishment. Two-way communication is more effective than one-way communication. Mission accomplishment depends on information passing accurately to and from subordinates and leaders, up and down the chain of command and NCO support channel, and laterally among adjacent organizations or activities. In garrison operations, organizations working on the same mission or project should be considered “adjacent.”

CHAIN OF COMMAND

3-34. The Army has only one chain of command. Through this chain of command, leaders issue orders and instructions and convey policies. An effective chain of command is a two-way communication channel. Its members do more than transmit orders; they carry information from within the unit or organization back up to its leader. They furnish information about how things are developing, notify the leader of problems, and provide request for clarification and help. Leaders at all levels use the chain of command—their subordinate leaders—to keep their people informed and render assistance. They continually facilitate the process of gaining the necessary clarification and solving problems.

3-35. Beyond conducting their normal duties, NCOs train soldiers and advise commanders on individual soldier readiness and the training needed to ensure unit readiness. Officers and DAC leaders should consult their command sergeant major, first sergeant, or NCOIC, before implementing policy. Leaders must continually communicate to avoid duplicating instructions or issuing conflicting orders. Continuous and open lines of communication enable leaders to freely plan, make decisions, and program future training and operations.

NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER SUPPORT CHANNEL

3-36. The NCO support channel parallels and reinforces the chain of command. NCO leaders work with and support the commissioned and warrant officers of their chain of command. For the chain of command to work efficiently, the NCO support channel must operate effectively. At battalion level and higher, the NCO support channel begins with the command sergeant major, extends through first sergeants, platoon sergeants and ends with section chiefs, squad leaders or team leaders.

The NCO support channel...is used for exchanging information; providing reports; issuing instructions, which are directive in nature; accomplishing routine but important activities in accordance with command policies and directives. Most often, it is used to execute established policies, procedures, and standards involving the performance, training, appearance, and conduct of enlisted personnel. Its power rests with the chain of command.

FM 22-600-20, *The Duties, Responsibilities, and Authority of NCOs*, 1977

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3-37. The connection between the chain of command and the NCO support channel is the senior NCO. Commanders issue orders through the chain of command, but senior NCOs must know and understand the orders to issue effective implementing instructions through the NCO support channel. Although the first sergeant and command sergeant major are not part of the formal chain of command, leaders should consult them on all enlisted soldier matters and individual training.

3-38. Successful leaders have good relationships with their senior NCOs. Successful commanders have a good leader-NCO relationship with their first sergeants and command sergeant major. The need for such a relationship applies to platoon leaders and platoon sergeants as well as to staff officers and NCOs. Senior NCOs have extensive experience in successfully completing missions and dealing with enlisted soldier issues. Also, senior NCOs can monitor organizational activities at all levels, take corrective action to keep the organization within the boundaries of the commander's intent, or report situations that require the attention of the officer leadership. A positive relationship between officers and NCOs creates conditions for success.

3-39. The NCO support channel assists the chain of command in accomplishing the following:

- Transmitting, instilling and ensuring the efficacy of the Army ethic.
- Planning and conducting the day-to-day unit operations within prescribed policies and directives.
- Training enlisted soldiers in their MOS as well as in the basic skills and attributes of a soldier.
- Supervising unit physical fitness training and ensuring that soldiers comply with the height/weight and appearance standards in AR 600-9, *The Army Weight Control Program*, and AR 670-1, *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*.
- Teaching soldiers the history of the Army, to include military customs, courtesies, and traditions.
- Caring for individual soldiers and their families both on and off duty.
- Teaching soldiers the mission of the unit and developing individual training programs to support the mission.
- Accounting for and maintaining individual arms and equipment of enlisted soldiers and unit equipment under their control.
- Administering and monitoring the NCO professional development program and other unit training programs.
- Achieving and maintaining Army values.
- Advising the commander on rewards and punishment for enlisted soldiers.

FM 7-21.13

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3-40. Soldiers should use the chain of command or the NCO support channel (as appropriate) to help solve problems, whether small or large. The chain of command and the NCO support channel are also effective and efficient means of communication from where the rubber meets the road to the very highest echelons of the Army. Whether you have a problem, suggestion, complaint or commendation the chain and the channel are the means to communicate to the leaders who need to know.